

>> HOMES & CONDOS



Yanic Simard

Let there be sophistication with white

They say you can't wear white after Labour Day and, although it feels like summer just started, *that* holiday weekend is almost here.

But there's really no rule that says your home can't wear white — the brightest of colours, it's an interior staple — year round. My favourite white (which I have put to good use with many clients over the years) is Benjamin Moore's OC-65 Chantilly Lace. It's true, white character has no pink, green or yellow undertone and works perfectly with any decor.

Lately I've been inspired to write about the sophisticated southern style that comes from decorating with white. After travelling to Vancouver and Calgary for a media tour, I flew west again (and south) to stay at The Modern Honolulu hotel in tranquil Hawaii. This trip came not long after visiting the James Royal Palm in colourful Miami, and Casa Angelina on Italy's Amalfi Coast: two more striking examples of the power of white-on-white decor.

Here's my guide to three different ways to work with this airy palette — and bring a breath of fresh air into your home — any time.

White on white: With wood

> Casa Angelina exudes classic Italian elegance: interiors are minimal and architectural, and especially so in their colour scheme. Keeping the walls white lets two other things stand out: the breathtaking natural blues outside and sculptural art inside. To create this timeless look, keep all of the essentials strictly white (including bedding, upholstery, walls, windows — everything) so that only the most precious objects are highlighted. > The character of traditional wooden boats drifting by just offshore are reflected in the hotel design: here, further drama is introduced by wood flooring. The rich, varied hues of midtone grains are brought to life

by stark walls as their natural depth contrasts the clean, man-made forms. Pair dramatic woods with a white palette to keep the overall effect simple.

> In public spaces, furniture pieces — such as desks — are faced with sheets of mirror, causing them to visually vanish and extending the look of the beautiful flooring.

**Tip:** If you've invested in beautiful hardwood (or simply want a cabinet or bar to appear to float) mirror the exterior to let that wood steal the show.

> Some of the rooms even use whitewashed floors. The look stays inviting because of the mix of materials — combine stained wood, metal trims, ceramic pottery and sheer and opaque fabrics for a calming palette where texture is the focus over colour.

White on white: With off-white

> The Modern Honolulu, as well as offering exceptional service, also provides a very tranquil environment. Their peaceful palette was not as stark as Casa Angelina's, instead combining pure whites with pale taupes and beiges to carry the spirit of sandy beaches indoors.

**Tip:** Use soft grey carpeting (a very practical shade), slipcovered furniture in light beiges, pale woods such as teak, lightly veined stone or marble for accents and clear glass for a scheme that gives an airy atmosphere without looking (or being) high maintenance.

> The Modern uses traditional Hawaiian fabrics and lots of beautiful flowers as colour pops — a perfect way to bring in a vibrant hue without committing to it long-term.

> The hotel also adds playful elements, such as real working ukuleles, to keep the rooms fun. Their tone-on-tone decor is a great opportunity to pair new finds with old favourites, and combine periods: as long as the palette stays consistent, you can easily mix high- and low-end furnishings, and antique with modern.

White on white: With pops of colour

> The James Royal Palm, found in sizzling Miami, exemplifies South Beach style — all about bright colour pops and eye-catching art. If pure white-on-white doesn't excite you, follow the Royal Palm's lead and use art to add interest, letting the solid



Pure whites with pale taupes and beiges carry the spirit of sandy beaches indoors at The Modern Honolulu hotel.

walls remain a blank, white canvas.

> The hotel uses oversized prints (such as palm leaves or wild colour strikes), applied whimsically to backrests and arms of generous sofas and chairs to give bursts of life. Translate this look into your home by reupholstering just a section (such as the back or seat) of drab dining chairs — using a small amount of fabric lets you choose a dramatic favourite without fear of overwhelming yourself.

> At the James, even everyday items are treated like art: often bathroom fixtures are framed with stretches of contrast tile, and the effect is both surprising and beautiful.

**Tip:** Applying tile like this in a bathroom or kitchen can highlight a great feature while also injecting some textural contrast in a modern way. Try using small subway tile in a dark colour to break up larger, lighter pieces.

> One of the most memorable design details here was the treatment of pendant wiring: when renovating the hotel allowed lamp cords to create organic forms on the walls to become a unique feature rather than a problem.

**Tip:** When adding new pendants (or sconces) at home, consider painting your cord a bright colour to add an even easier modern pop, or masking it with a gold-toned metal cover for a glam look.



The James Royal Palm hotel in Miami exemplifies South Beach style.

>HOW TO USE WHITE

If a bright white design sounds like your kind of hotel getaway at home, simply decide which approach suits your style, follow my tips and you'll feel like you're on vacation in no time.

1. Feel free to embrace white interiors all year round.

2. Keep everything else white to highlight prized possessions.
3. Mix whites with off-whites (sand, taupe, grey) for relaxed sophistication.
4. Upholster the backs of chairs with bold prints for lively pops of colour.
5. Let pendant wiring be a feature.

**Yanic Simard**, principal of Toronto Interior Design Group, appears every two weeks. Read his blogs and contact him at tidg.ca, or follow him on Twitter,

Facebook, YouTube, Houzz and Pinterest. He will appear Aug. 13 and 15 at 10 a.m. on *Cityline*, and is design editor of the New Condo Guide.

Choose foliage over flowers to ensure longevity

GARDENS from H1

And so she decided to transform hanging shoe bags into 120 individual grow bags for celery, tomatoes, mint and peppers.

"The celery grew amazing," she says, "And I had enough tomatoes for three salads!" She also designed a system for growing potatoes in a tower of plastic milk crates and harvested 50 pounds of spuds last year.

As a surprise for her "foodie" sister Eileen, master gardener Maureen Hulbert used just five plant-filled pots to transform a small, shady north-facing balcony into a cosy, walk-out garden. Doing double-duty as both a beautiful and an edible garden, the containers featured lettuce, mint, purple fennel and parsley mixed with ornamental plants such as Japanese painted ferns, variegated English ivy and colourful coleus.

Keeping container plants well-watered is especially tricky on rooftops and balconies where sun and wind can wick moisture from the soil very quickly. Vaughan admits to watering

One of the most surprising things master gardener Claire Trepanier found when she started gardening on her ninth-floor rooftop garden 15 years ago, was that she could grow perennials in pots — and they would stay alive year after year.

"I've had clematis for five years," she says, "growing in a deep, 14-inch-diameter container that's shaded at the bottom so the roots don't heat up," she says. She also grows hostas, hydrangeas and a lovely dwarf lilac called "Miss Kim." Her advice to first-time balcony gardeners is to keep it simple. "Start with three containers," she says, "and try something easy like cedars. You don't have to tend them like you do annuals."

Trepanier clusters her cedars to make a privacy fence and they form the "bones" of her rooftop garden just as foundation plants do around a house.

Tips for what, how to grow

As you consider a future balcony garden, Sara Katz of Wild At Heart Design recommends selecting tough



CLAIRE TREPANIER

Ornamental grasses add drama and stand up to the wind on balconies.

good dwarf specimen with blue-green foliage.

**2. 'Walker's Low' catmint:** A short, bushy perennial, this member of the Nepeta family blooms all summer and attracts pollinators, too. When choosing flowering annuals or perennials, "always go for the short varieties," says Katz, "because of the wind. Otherwise, the flowers and leaves get ragged."

**3. Ornamental grasses:** Medium-sized and short varieties do best on windy balconies. Katz recommends those no taller than two feet, includ-

won't last long on windy balconies. Instead of hanging them, Trepanier recommends popping them into containers for an instant garden.

**Know the rules:** Real estate agent and master gardener Josée Couture stresses the importance of checking building regulations. Many condos restrict the use of window boxes on railings and prohibit drilling of holes in walls.

**Overwintering perennials, shrubs and trees:** Select plants that are a zone or two harder than our Zone 6 ground-bound GTA gardens.

> ASK JOE



Joe Richer

Go ahead and see the house

Is it ok to have the listing show me a house?

Getting in fast to see a property can make the difference between finding your dream home and missing the opportunity.

If your real estate agent or team can't show you the house, the listing representative does. Ask your representative to set up a meeting with both professionals understanding the involvement.

Any information you divulge as a seller's agent can be shared with the buyer's agent and may put you at a disadvantage in your offer.

If you like the place, go back and see it again with your own agent.

**Update:** My July 20 column